February General Meeting

Wednesday, February 16

The Natural History of Kern County

A Big Picture in a Small Frame

with Alison Sheehey

7 p.m. Social—7:30 p.m. Program

Why does landlocked Kern County have a bird list of 443 species? It boasts a diversity of plant and animal life unparalleled for any area in North America, north of Mexico. Our February program will track the natural history of Kern County from its beginnings to the modern day. Our whirlwind journey will explore the influences of geology, tectonics, paleontology, Floristic Provinces, Native Americans, early settlers, and recent events that has led to Kern County’s diverse assemblage of flora and fauna.

Alison Sheehey, aka Nature Ali, is the Outreach Director for Audubon California’s Kern River Preserve. She first moved to Kern County in 1980 and began exploring the intricacies of the geology and wildlife of the desert environs of the Temblor Range, a place many regarded as an ugly wasteland. Seeing beauty in every natural niche is one of the many talents of “Nature Ali”. A member of Audubon Society since 1985, she has been a staunch advocate for the environmental protection of Kern County. Her website, www.natureali.org, provides an encyclopedia of free information on the natural history of Kern County. Come join us and learn all about this wonderful destination for nature exploration in Southern California.

Kern Valley Bird Trip

April 8-10

Only two spots still available!

Call Andy Brumbaugh

760–434-3334

Nature Center Gala and Auction!

Saturday, February 26

The BVAS Nature Center will host a special gala evening in February featuring a gourmet taco bar, assorted drinks, and live music. The featured attraction of the evening, however, will be a fun auction of hand-crafted bird houses and feeders. Martha Barnette, co-host of the popular NPR radio program “A Way With Words”, will oversee “A Way With Birds”, the auction of unique birdhouses and feeders made by local artists and other BVAS supporters. The bird houses and feeders will range from the rustic to the fanciful, and will be sold by both silent and live auction. A wide range of price levels is expected. We’ll have a hosted bar for wine and beer, and local band “The Endangered Speciez Project” will provide the musical entertainment. Stone Brewery and Jimbo’s Naturally are contributing sponsors. Admission is free, however there is a suggested donation of $5 to help cover expenses. All proceeds will go to support the Nature Center and BVAS programs.
It’s Nature’s Way

So, what was your first reaction to the photo accompanying this story? Aside from being blown away by the remarkable skill of the photographer in capturing this high-speed, mid-air encounter at the perfect dramatic moment and in such sharp focus, did you mostly feel happy for the predator or sorry for the prey?

Will Sooter is a North County resident and member of BVAS. He is also an amazing photographer who has spent the last eight years documenting the peregrine falcons that nest in the sandstone cliffs above Torrey Pines beach. His photo of this adult peregrine falcon with a willet in its clutches was selected from among hundreds of entries as a first-prize winner in the 2010 Audubon Magazine Photography Awards. Will’s winning photo appears in the January issue of Audubon Magazine, and he will be taking an all-expense paid trip to Peru this year as part of his prize package. That’s quite an honor for Will, and we congratulate him. To see more of Will’s amazing photos, visit his website at: www.sharpeyesonline.com.

But let me go back to my opening question about your initial reaction to the photo. Most of us just can’t help ourselves. When it comes to Nature, our natural inclination is to take sides. We root for certain species, decry the “bullies” of the natural world, rank animals on our own personal cuteness scales, and support or don’t support their preservation accordingly. We complain about crows, coyotes, ground squirrels, ants, poison oak, nettles, and a hundred other animal and plant species that might discomfort or inconvenience us in some way. We squash spiders, crush caterpillars, and knock cliff swallow nests off our buildings. When I was a kid I’d visit my grandmother in upstate New York. She always took delight in the tadpoles, crayfish, snakes, hop toads, and other critters I’d bring home from the creek, woods, and meadows that surrounded her property. She’d teach me about those animals, and tell me stories of her own encounters with the raccoons, snakes, skunks, and even wolves of her youth. After a day or two my captives would be released back to the wilds, and I’d be off hunting for bird nests, catching bees in a mason jar, or following box turtle and rabbit trails through the tall meadow grass. Over the course of my youth, I learned a lot of Nature’s lessons. If you love Her as I do, you very well may have similar memories from your childhood.

One of the things we try to do at Buena Vista Audubon Society is help our young children, and sometimes their young parents as well, learn to appreciate all of Nature’s wonderful diversity. We sometimes have to remind each other that every living thing has a place and a purpose on this earth, a right to exist, and also a destiny to die. It was a good day for the peregrine in this photo—it was able to feed itself and its young. As for the willet, it was a mature bird, had lived life to the fullest, and ultimately passed from this world with grace and purpose. Would that we all.

—Andy Mauro

March 3-6—Marina Village, Mission Bay

2011 San Diego Bird Festival and Audubon California Assembly

BVAS members are familiar with the birding trips, workshops, and programs associated with the San Diego Bird Fest, organized and run each year by S. D. Audubon. This year, Audubon California will hold its equally acclaimed Annual Assembly in San Diego in conjunction with the Bird Fest. The Assembly annually attracts more than 200 leaders and key volunteers from the among the state’s 49 Audubon chapters. Breakout sessions for the Assembly are open to all registrants and will cover a diverse array of topics. Some sessions on chapter fundraising, volunteer coordination, board effectiveness, nature education programs, conservation partnerships, birds and renewable energy, etc. will have particular interest to chapter leaders and Audubon activists. Other sessions will be keyed to birders in general. If you haven’t yet registered for the 2011 Bird Festival and Audubon Assembly, there’s still time to take advantage of this year’s San Diego location.

Get more information and links to on-line registration at www.ca.audubon.org/assembly.php.
Let's Go Birding—Everyone’s Welcome!

Whelan Lake Monthly Bird Count
with John Haddock
Saturday—February 5—8 a.m.
Whelan Lake is a reserve with a freshwater lake and riparian edge habitat. **Directions:** I-5 to Hwy. 76 East, left at Douglas and continue to light at North River Rd., left on North River Rd. Meet at the cul-de-sac at the end of the road by the entrance gate. Leader: John Haddock, 760-941-7824.

Lake Guajome
with Steve Brad
Sunday—February 13—8 a.m.
Guajome County Park features a lake, freshwater marsh, riparian woodlands, tall eucalyptus trees, and landscaped parklands. The varied habitats are easily traversed in a two-hour walk and provide excellent opportunities for an extensive bird list. The park is known for attracting sapsuckers, exciting warblers, sparrows, and other unusual over-wintering species. **Directions:** From I-5, take Hwy 76 East 7.5 miles to Guajome Lake Rd. Turn right and proceed to the Guajome County Park main entrance. You can park along the road outside the entrance, or inside the park ($5 day-use fee). We’ll meet at the entrance at 8 a.m. Leader: Steve Brad, 760-633-1639; stevebrad1@earthlink.net.

Buena Vista Lagoon Bird Count
with Joan Fountain
Saturday—Feb. 26—8 a.m.
Join the regular monthly bird survey team and get to know the Buena Vista Lagoon. Have the satisfaction of contributing to the ongoing bird database and knowledge of the birds of our lagoon. We always record a nice assortment of freshwater wetland and marsh species on this easy-paced monthly excursion. **Directions:** I-5 to I-78 East, take Jefferson St. exit, turn right and make another right turn onto Lagoon View Dr. Leader: Joan Fountain, 760-729-1379.

Basic Birding Class at the Buena Vista Lagoon Landing
with Tom Troy
Saturday—February 26—8:30 a.m.
Novice birders are invited to join our monthly class for some informal, no-pressure birding. We’ll share friendly tips and help you build your bird identification skills. **Directions:** I-5 to I-78 East. From I-78, take Jefferson St. exit and go right to the light on Jefferson St. Turn right again and make an immediate right turn into the BVL Landing parking lot. Leader: Tom Troy, 760-420-7328.

Kern River Trip—April 8-10
Our trip to the Kern River Valley has two spots left. Check last month’s newsletter or BVAS website for info. —Andy Brumbaugh: 760-434-3334; andybbirder@yahoo.com.

Great Backyard Bird Count
The Great Backyard Bird Count will take place over Presidents’ Day weekend, February 18-21. This annual event calls upon America’s amateur birders to spend a little time recording the birds they see in some very familiar territory—their own backyards. Anyone can participate, regardless of age or level of birding expertise. People can count birds for as little as 15 minutes on one day, or for as long as they like each of the four days of the event. It’s free, fun, and easy—and the information collected will help guide bird conservation programs in the years ahead.

For more information, including general tips and how to report your sightings, pick up a flyer at the BVAS Nature Center, or follow the link to The Great Backyard Bird Count webpage at http://www.birdsource.org.

Preschool Nature Storytime
Monday, February 28, 10 a.m.
It’s February, and grey whales are once again moving north along our coastline. Baby grey whales also join in the spring migration, and they have a lot to learn as they journey to their summer home in the Arctic Sea. Bring your little ones to our February Nature Storytime. We’ll have songs, a story, and a craft, as we learn about our great big friends in the sea. If you have any questions about Storytime, please contact Mary Ellen at 760-918-6622.
Buena Vista Native Plant Club
Third Sunday of the Month
February 20—2 p.m.—Nature Center

“That Other Love of your Life”

February brings us Valentine’s Day, a day to honor and profess one’s feelings to a special love. We hesitate to bring up a possible sore point, but does your significant other truly appreciate the depth of this passion you’ve been harboring for some other certain someones of the local community? We’re talking about this love affair you have with native plants, of course. Maybe it’s time you introduce your sweetheart to the arousing scent of a gently rubbed sage leaf, or the primal pleasure of a handful of warm soil on a sunny spring day. Share your passion by bringing your honey to our Native Plant Club meeting in February. We’ll talk a bit about pollination, and how it is that plants do it. But most of all, we’ll just spend time smelling the sage and feeling the warm soil. Join us! For basic info and tips about native plant gardening, check out the Native Plant Club site at: www.bvaudubon.org.

For questions regarding the Native Plant Club, e-mail Joan Bockman at: BVNPC@sbcglobal.net, or call the Nature Center at 760-439-2473.

Conservation Matters
Dealing with the Winter Rains

Most drought-weary San Diegans relished the recent rains. A replenished water table, green hillsides, and the promise of spring wildflowers were all good news to nature lovers. Once again, however, the county’s aged sewage infrastructure failed the test. Throughout the county, 26 sewage spills leaked more than 8 million gallons into local waterways during the last week of December. Nowhere was the problem more pronounced than at Buena Vista Creek and Lagoon, where more than 5.5 million gallons of sewage fouled the water. The cause of the problem was different from the 7-million-gallon spill in 2007, but the lagoon and ocean were awash in raw sewage nonetheless.

The lagoon suffers from man-imposed constraints which impact its control of floodwaters and its historical function as an estuary. Water can’t flow and drain naturally because of the freeway, Coast Hwy., and the RR tracks. The lagoon’s weir serves as a final barrier, preventing both the drainage of water out into the ocean and a cleansing tidal flushing of the lagoon. Perhaps continued hard lessons from nature and additional stiff fines may ultimately force the sewer authority and resource agencies to seek some long-term answers. —Andy Mauro

Location:
2202 South Coast Hwy.
Oceanside, CA
(East side of street on north shore of lagoon)

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 480
Oceanside, CA
92049-0480

Phone: 760-439-2473

Hours:
Tuesday-Saturday — 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Sunday—1 p.m.-4 p.m.
Closed Monday

Website:
www.bvaudubon.org

E-mail:
bvaudubon@sbcglobal.net

Field Trip Hotline:
760-688-0660
FRIENDS OF BUENA VISTA AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

As a Friend of BVAS, I will receive the chapter newsletter, be invited to special events just for Friends and receive a discount on BVAS Gift Shop purchases. The BVAS Nature Center and its educational programs will receive 100% of my contribution. Minimum donation suggested: $25.

I would like to donate $ 25 ___ $50 ___ $ 100 ___ Other: ___

Name____________________________
Address__________________________
City, State, Zip ___________________
Phone___________________________
E-mail___________________________

*Send me my newsletter by e-mail.

Get your Lagoon Flyer Digitally!
I’d like to get my Lagoon Flyer a week earlier, in full color, and save BVAS the cost of printing and postage. I’ve listed my e-mail address.

Please sign me up!

Please Bill My Credit Card:
Card #_______________________
CRN______
Make Checks Payable to:
Buena Vista Audubon Society
P.O. Box 480
Oceanside, CA  92049

Snipe Hunt? Basic Birders Have Fun at Christmas Bird Count

Were you ever asked to go on a snipe hunt in high school? Wasn't this another way for boys to ask girls out for a kiss in the woods? Do you remember wondering if there really was a bird called a snipe? Basic birders discussed all of this and more at the recent Oceanside Christmas Bird Count.

This year, 35 people joined the Basic Birding Class team for the CBC. The team tallied 58 species in four hours as it made its usual stops on the loop around Buena Vista Lagoon. Not a bad day for a bunch of beginners!

The bird of the day was the elusive Wilson's snipe. Good looks at a snipe are hard to come by, and, unfortunately and true to form, this bird was only observed by the seven group leaders who arrived early on Lagoon View Way. This one-mile stretch of road parallels the 78 freeway and it is an ugly, noisy, littered place, but it can produce some interesting birds. The leaders usually count this road before class begins because it catches the morning sun earlier than BVL Landing. The snipe was found at the opening of the large drainage culvert that runs under the freeway and creates a mini-mudflat at its mouth. Basic birding regulars know this spot well because it often turns up something unusual. Last summer we watched a mother killdeer raise two fluffy chicks in this ditch.

While we were observing the snipe with perfect morning light and with incredible optical clarity, I once again realized why we all go birding. This was one of those magical moments that keeps us all coming back for more. There could not have been a more perfect way to start our day.

Reflecting back over my years of participation in the basic birding class, monthly lagoon counts, and the CBC, I have to say that it just keeps getting better and better. The only thing more interesting than the birds is the unique group of humans that keeps us all coming back for more. There could not have been a more perfect way to start to our day.

Join the Basic Birding Class for its next lagoon count on Saturday, February 26. We can't promise a snipe, but we do promise you a fun-filled morning of citizen science at its best. For more info call me (Tom Troy) at 760-420-7328.

—Tom Troy

Wilson’s Snipe —Jim Pea

2010 Oceanside CBC
No Rain, Lots of Birds!

With a beautiful sun-filled day at hand, well over 100 birders took to the parks, fields, lagoons, and back yards of North County to officially tally 192 species of birds in the 2010 Oceanside Christmas Bird Count in December. The welcome respite from a rain-filled week resulted in some great birds being recorded during the count. Highlights included vermillion flycatcher, tropical kingbird, orchard oriole, green-tailed towhee, greater white-fronted geese, three species of sapsuckers, four species of owls (including a burrowing owl), reddish egret, black scoter, and glaucous gull. The final tally figures to rank among the top 15 count totals within the United States. Other counts within the county also did well, with San Diego recording an amazing 218 species and the Rancho Santa Fe circle matching Oceanside with 192 species on its list. A big thank you to CBC coordinator, Terry Hunefeld, the BVAS volunteers, and to all the participants.
Quick Calendar for February

Fri. Feb. 4 —Board Meeting—9 a.m.
Sat. Feb. 5—Whelan Lake Walk—8 a.m.
Mon. Feb. 7—Nature Guides Meeting—10 a.m.
Sun. Feb. 13—Lake Guajome Bird Walk—8 a.m.
Wed. Feb. 16—General Meeting—7 p.m.
Sun. Feb. 20—Native Plant Club—2 p.m.
Sat. Feb. 26—Buena Vista Lagoon Count—8 a.m.
Sat. Feb. 26—Basic Birding at B.V. L. Landing—8:30 a.m.
Mon. Feb. 28—Nature Storytime—10 a.m.

Willet Having a Good Day

We present this photo as a reminder that willets often have beautiful, carefree days under a shining sun. For an alternate view, see our photo on Page 2.
Audubon California Assembly 2011: Observe and Conserve

Looking for a way to connect with your fellow Auduboners and bird enthusiasts in California? Want to get more involved in one of California’s most exciting conservation movements? Then join us March 4 through 6 in San Diego for the next Audubon California Assembly.

We’re very excited that the 2011 Assembly will be held in conjunction with the San Diego Bird Festival, which means that participants will have an even greater selection of workshops, excursions, and special events to choose from.

Although all Audubon Assembly and Festival events can be purchased separately, your best bet is to buy an Assembly Pass and get all the following. Look for the pass at the bottom of the registration form:

**Opening banquet**

This year’s opening banquet on Friday night will be a joint event with the Audubon California Assembly and the San Diego Bird Festival and will feature Peter Harrison as the keynote speaker. Harrison, widely considered the world’s foremost authority on seabirds, has written several books and is a compelling voice for these fascinating species. His address will be preceded by welcomes from San Diego Audubon President Peter Thomas and Audubon California Executive Director Graham Chisholm.

**Special events for Assembly participants**

Those who buy an Assembly Pass to attend all Audubon California workshops can attend a special private party on Saturday night to meet new Audubon President David Yarnold. There will also be a special Mexican Sunday Brunch with Graham Chisholm and a unique meeting with California Coastal Commissioners.

**Workshops and presentations**

- Workshop on new Audubon seabird conservation program and Marine IBAs
- Future of Conservation presentations by youth
- Snowy Plover Share the Shore exhibition of contest winners from youth
- Workshops for chapter leaders on building Boards, fund raising, education programs and care and feeding of volunteers
- Birds and Oil Spills update from the front lines on SF Bay and Gulf of Mexico
- Birds and Pacific Flyway Workshop
- Birds and Private Lands Workshop
- Also Andrea Jones and Andy Mauro (Buena Vista Audubon) will lead a field trip to Northern San Diego Lagoons – all Important Bird Areas – on Friday

**Registration: Download the Festival Program and Registration Forms at:**
ca.audubon.org/assembly.php
192 Species Recorded!

2010 Oceanside Christmas Bird Count
By Terry Hunefeld

The data from the Oceanside-Carlsbad Christmas Bird Count have been compiled and it appears we have once again reached 192 species (plus 49 Nutmeg Mannikins).

Thank You! We are most grateful for the generous volunteers at Buena Vista Audubon Society who put on a great hot lunch for hungry birders at the Nature Center as birders returned from the field. They promise to be back at next season’s Oceanside-Carlsbad CBC on Monday, December 26, 2011 (Mark your calendars).

Our express thanks goes to the team captains and the participants who braved a chilly but sunny morning to count more than 37,000 birds. Welcome (and thank you!) to new Team Leaders Paula Theobald (Bonsall Moro Hill), Ann Hannon (Batiquitos), Jan Nordenberg (East Vista – Brengle Terrace), Gary Van Velsir (Palomar College – Twin Oaks Golf), Becky Wilbanks (Anstine Property – S. Guajome) and Dave Batzler (Lake San Marcos).

And thanks to our returning leaders who "take charge" of their areas, organize their team, pre-scout their area, contact golf course managers to gain access and handle all the paperwork for their team: Steve Brad (Aviara Golf), Stan Walens (La Costa Golf), Lt. Commander Peter A Ginsburg (Ret) (Gopher Canyon North), Jerry and Carol Manning (Gopher Canyon South), Joni Ciarletta (Dawson Creek), Major Jeff Coker & Geoff Rogers (Calavera), Andy Mauro (Agua Hedionda), Andy Brumbaugh (Mira Costa College), Pete Suffredini (Oceana), Ken Weaver (Guajome), Dennis Huckabay (Mission), Ross Christie (Oceanside Muni Golf / Libby Lake), Bruce Rideout (Whelan Lake), John Haddock (Fire Mt – Eternal Hills), Tim Burr (Santa Margarita river mouth), Phil Unitt (Camp Pendleton central), Robert Patton (Camp Pendleton Windmill Lake), Doug & Mickey Nail (Buena Vista Lagoon), Tom Blackman (Oceanside Pier & Harbor), Dave Povey (35 years doing the pelagic portion and counting), Guy McCaskie (Buddy Todd Park), the Wandering Orphan Paul Lehman (Wandering) and extra gratitude to Tom Troy and Jim Pea for enthusiastically leading and inspiring a class of 30 new birders, many on their first Christmas Bird Count.

Species missed on previous counts but recorded this season include: Eurasian Wigeon, Least Bittern, Ross’s Goose, Brant, Wandering Tattler, White Pelican, Black Turnstone, Mew Gull, Common Murre, Rhinoceros Auklet, Cassin’s Auklet, Red Phalarope, Wilson’s Snipe, Common Ground Dove, Cassin’s Vireo, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Fox Sparrow, Bullock’s Oriole, Lawrence’s Goldfinch and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Seldom recorded surprises include: Orchard Oriole, Vermilion Flycatcher, Burrowing Owl and Tropical Kingbird. These may be the first count records of Orchard Oriole and Vermilion Flycatcher (they certainly have not been recorded in the past 20 years); the Burrowing Owl was the first CBC record since 1998.

Vermilion Flycatcher
Not quite as uncommon (but often not recorded) **species include:** Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Goose, Glaucous Gull, Yellow-breasted Sapsucker, American Redstart, Green-tailed Towhee, Plumbeous Vireo, Bullock’s Oriole, Reddish Egret and Western Tanager. Black-necked Stilts have never been plentiful in North County in the winter, averaging about 30 per year on this CBC. This year one was recorded. A startlingly high number of 735 Tree Swallows were recorded, breaking the 20 year high count of 186. Tree Swallows generally average from a handful to 100 each count.


**TRENDS:**
The explosive range expansion of Allen’s / Selasphorus Hummingbirds seems to have reached a plateau. The first (1) "selas" was recorded in 2006; 17 in 2007; 27 in 2008, 90 in 2009 and 56 this count. In comparison, Anna’s Hummingbirds averaged about 500 per count through the 1990’s, and 750 per count through the 2000’s. Eurasian Collard Doves first appeared in 2006 and have numbered 5, 32, 18, 70 and 63 over the past 5 counts. In comparison, Rock Pigeons have averaged about 1000 per count for the past 20 years. American Crows increased from about 500 per count in the early 1990’s to 1000 per count in the late 1990’s increasing to 1500 per count from 2002 – 2006. Their numbers then increased rapidly: 1930 in 2007; 2351 in 2008; 5077 in 2009 and 3571 this year. Crows made up nearly 10% of this year’s total species of slightly more than 37,000 birds. In comparison, Common Raven, appears to be slowly declining. Ravens averaged around 200 per count in the early 1990’s – the trend has been slowly downward each year since - to about 60 per count the last few years.

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Again, thank you to all who participated, especially the team leaders. Their taking the same area each year provides essential continuity from year to year - surveying the same areas in the same fashion, thereby providing essential context to the ebb and flow of birds in our region.

W. Terry Hunefeld, Encinitas
Life is short. Seabird often.
In memory of Luke Cole and Mike San Miguel
"Come on out with us to see what's out there."

Southern California Seabirding Trips by: Buena Vista Audubon Society
Los Coronados Islands & Nine Mile Bank all the way to the edge of the Continental Shelf

**NOTE:** Photos on this page credited Bill Hubick Photography: [http://www.billhubick.com](http://www.billhubick.com).

**Burrowing owl, another of the uncommon sightings for this year’s count.**

**Nutmeg mannikin, an increasingly common exotic bird species in San Diego, but not yet officially “countable”**.